

Message Text

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O 160122Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPR, CG

SUBJECT: SHABA INCURSIONS: U.S. PRESS REACTION

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF UPI DATE LINE KINSHASA WHICH
APPEAR IN THE WASHINGTON STAR MAY 15.
2. QUOTE - ANTI-GOVERNMENT REBELS APPEARED TODAY TO HAVE
SEIZED TWO IMPORTANT TOWNS IN ZAIRE'S COPPER-RICH SHABA
PROVINCE AMID HEAVY FIGHTING THAT COULD HAVE DANGEROUS IN-
TERNATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS.

THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT MOBUTO SESE SEKO CALLED FOR
HELP FROM FRIENDS IN THE WEST AND FROM MOROCCO AND CHINA.

IN PARIS, THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT SAID IT HAS RECEIVED A FOR-
MAL REQUEST FOR AID FROM KINSHASA.

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IN BRUSSELS, A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL SAID BELGIUM,
THE FORMER COLONIAL POWER, IS SOUNDING OUT THE VIEWS OF
OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH MIGHT BE CALLED ON TO HELP ZAIRE.

BUT ZAIREAN OPPOSITION GROUPS WARNED FOREIGNERS TO STAY
OUT OF WHAT THEY SAID WAS AN INTERNAL POPULAR STRUGGLE TO
PUT AN END TO 13 YEARS OF MOBUTU'S INCREASINGLY CHAOTIC

RULE IN THE FORMER BELGIAN CONGO.

THEY REJECTED MOBUTU'S ALLEGATION THE REVOLT WAS SPAWNED IN ANGOLA, SPEARHEADED BY CUBANS AND HELPED BY RUSSIANS, ALGERIANS AND LIBYANS.

IN WASHINGTON, THE STATE DEPARTMENT CONFIRMED THE REBELS HAD SEIZED THE MINING TOWN OF KOLWEZI, BUT THE ZAIRE GOVERNMENT DENIED IT. KOLWEZI IS 220 MILES EAST OF THE ANGOLAN BORDER, BUT CLOSER TO ZAMBIA. THE GOVERNMENT SAID THE REBELS STRUCK ACROSS THE ZAMBIAN FRONTIER THURSDAY AFTER LEAVING CAMPS IN ANGOLA. OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN IN EUROPE DENIED THIS AND SAID THE REVOLT WAS ENTIRELY INDIGENOUS.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAID IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE REBELS HAD SUCCEEDED IN TAKING MUTSHATSHA, A TOWN 60 MILES WEST OF KOLWEZI. ZAIREAN OFFICIALS CONCEDED GOVERNMENT FORCES HAD GIVEN UP THE TOWN IN A TACTICAL RETREAT.

IN BRUSSELS, A BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN SAID THE REBELS HAD SET UP A RUDIMENTARY POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION IN THE KOLWEZI REGION, THE MINING AND RAILROAD HUB OF SHABA, FORMERLY KATANGA, PROVINCE.

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THE PARIS-BASED CONGO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT URGED WESTERN GOVERNMENTS TO STAY OUT OF THE CONFLICT, DENYING MOBUTU'S CLAIMS OF CUBAN PARTICIPATION. THE FRONT, WHICH SAYS IT IS THE POLITICAL FORCE BEHIND THE UPRISING, SAID THE REBELS WERE SHABA NATIVES TRYING TO OVERTHROW MOBUTU.

ZAIRE'S OFFICIAL AZAP NEWS AGENCY CHARGED YESTERDAY THAT WHILE KATANGESE EXILES LIVING IN ANGOLA FORMED THE BACKBONE OF THE REBEL COLUMN THAT ATTACKED MUTSHATSHA, THE GROUP INCLUDED "WHITES WHO HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS CUBANS."

AZAP SAID, HOWEVER, THE ATTACK ON MUTSHATSHA HAD BEEN REPULSED IN A 2 1/2 HOUR BATTLE WITH THE HELP OF ZAIREAN FRENCH-BUILT MIRAGE FIGHTER-BOMBERS.

ANOTHER EXILED OPPOSITION GROUP, THE CONGO-LUMUMBA NATIONAL MOVEMENT, SAID IN BRUSSELS THE REVOLT "INVOLVES POPULAR FORCES FROM EVERY WALK OF LIFE" AND NOT JUST THE KATANGESE.

THE KATANGESE ARE THE SAME FORCE THAT FOUGHT IN VAIN FOR AN INDEPENDENT KATANGA SOON AFTER ZAIRE, THE FORMER

BELGIAN CONGO, ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE IN 1960 AND AGAIN IN
EARLY 1977.

THE KATANGESE INVADED ZAIRE 14 MONTHS AGO AND FOUGHT
AN 80-DAY WAR BEFORE FADING AWAY UNDER ATTACKS BY MOBUTU'S
BETTER-ARMED TROOPS, WHO WERE STIFFENED BY THE PRESENCE OF
A 3,000-MAN MOROCCAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

THE LATEST INVASION STARTED THURSDAY, APPARENTLY ACCOUNTING
FOR A TOTAL BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNICATIONS IN AND OUT OF
ZAIRE.

BELGIAN OFFICIALS SAID THE PRESENT INVASION APPEARED TO BE
EVEN MORE SERIOUS THAN LAST YEAR'S ATTACK, WHICH WAS TURNED
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BACK WELL SHORT OF KOLWEZI.

THE NEWS AGENCY QUOTED MOBUTU AS SAYING THE NEW INVASION
WAS "SUPPORTED ONCE MORE BY THE RUSSIANS, THE CUBANS,
AND TWO NORTH AFRICA COUNTRIES, LIBYA AND ALGERIA." END
QUOTE. VANCE

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